

## Philosopher, Translator, Teacher

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**Abstract.**—This paper offers two examples of the difficulties of translation, one from Wittgenstein and the other from Heidegger. Importantly, neither of these deals with a case of jargon or the problems of idioms. I will take the Wittgenstein examples first as the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* preceded *Being and Time* by roughly a decade. The following examples serve merely to illustrate the role of the translator as more than one of “moving” the words from one language to another. The translator rather must expand the horizons of a particular audience to make present ideas that have not yet appeared against that background, i.e. a translator must move the audience from the background of one language into the background of another. In short, the translator must teach.

**Keywords:** Translation, Teaching, Heidegger, Wittgenstein, Environment, Horizon, Background, World

As early as 1941 a commentator on Heidegger’s ideas, Russian philosopher Nikolai Berdyaev, remarked on Heidegger’s brilliance as well as disparaged his use of his personal neologisms stating that, “[h]e is one of the most serious and interesting philosophers of our time. His chasing after new phrases and a new terminology is a little irritating; although he is a great master in this respect.” (Berdyaev 1957, 116) By the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, Hubert Dreyfus has done much to correct and enhance current English translations of Heidegger’s works, notably *Being and Time* (BT) but his work demonstrates more than anything the difficulties in translating from one language to another even among languages that share a relatively recent common root such as German and English. While Heidegger’s deliberately unorthodox use of words and his penchant for inventing new ones mostly only add to the difficulty in translating his works but they are not the only reason for the difficulties. The two very different English translations of Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (TLP) attest to this. Wittgenstein’s abrupt, aphoristic writing style, which has no counterpart in English, presents its own difficulties however; Wittgenstein’s very deliberate use of vocabulary according to strict definitions surprisingly does not make his works any easier than Heidegger’s. These, combined with the prejudices of those reading his work in light of his association with Bertrand Russell and the Cambridge School as well as his being an Austrian and therefore associated, perhaps erroneously, too closely with his contemporaries of the Vienna Circle, has led to large-scale misreading of his TLP.<sup>1</sup>

We have here two demonstrable instances of the importance and the role of the translator as philosopher; BT and TLP each, at the time of this writing, come in two very different translations in English. The superior Pears/McGuinness translation of the TLP,

<sup>1</sup> This idea is explored in greater depth in Alan Janik’s and Stephen Toulmin’s book, *Wittgenstein’s Vienna*.

done with reference to Wittgenstein's own comments and correspondence with Ogden about the first English translation, portrays a rather different project than one reads from the Ogden version. In the case of *BT*, one of Heidegger's last students, Joan Stambaugh recently released an English translation of *BT*, updated with a more contemporary, late-twentieth century American English, in the hope that it would make the work more understandable. Unfortunately the primary advantage of the Stambaugh version, although indeed correcting some of the errors of the M/R translation, is merely the inclusion of Heidegger's own, handwritten marginal notes, which he made over the course of his lifetime in his personal copy of *BT*. Indeed, the Stambaugh translation demonstrates far better that translation is not a matter of moving words from one language into another. The Stambaugh translation has in fact, by rendering the language more accessible to a contemporary English speaking audience, blurred or lost the distinctions and subtleties that Heidegger was attempting to bring out. It is not enough, or not even correct for the translator to move the words more or less accurately across languages but rather the translator's job is actually more akin to that of a teacher. Teachers don't always simply plug knowledge into the minds of eagerly waiting pupils, and not merely because the pupils are often not particularly eager but they are more effective when they create an environment where learning by the pupil is able to take place. This idea had not occurred to me in regards to translation until spending my time abroad in a German speaking environment, having grownup in an English speaking environment.

The translator, any translator, not only the translator of philosophical works, ancient or contemporary, but of everyday language as well, must move those very ideas and concepts into a world that is defined, at least in part, by a different set of ideas and concepts such that the target audience reaches and understanding intended for the original audience. The web is full of humorous examples of instances of a breakdown in this process, not necessarily due to the false translation of specific words, after all, as Wittgenstein says in bullet point 3.343 of the *TLP*, "[d]efinitions are rules for translating from one language into another. Any correct sign-language must be translatable into any other in accordance with such rules: it is this that they all have in common." (Wittgenstein 1993, 18) In so far as this goes Wittgenstein is right, however, this is only the beginning of translation, not the end and these humorous errors occur not always because the words were not translated literally according to definitions but often because they were.

My first example of a translation difficulty comes from Wittgenstein's *TLP*. The word, *reality*, has two counterparts in German, both of which Wittgenstein uses and in different ways. However, as they have only the single word 'reality' as their English counterpart, the distinction Wittgenstein is drawing is impossible to detect without an understanding of the original German and it is therefore necessary for the translator to *teach* this subtle distinction that does not appear in the English speaking environment. The first instances of the word, *reality*, occur in bullet points 2.06 – 2.063. In these bullet points Wittgenstein uses the German *Wirklichkeit*. This correctly gets translated as 'reality' but, as we shall see, this will create problems later in the *TLP* when Wittgenstein uses the German word *Realität* that obviously also gets correctly translated as 'reality'. However, when we break down the word *Wirklichkeit* we find that it consists of the German noun *Wirkung*, which translates normally as effect with the verb form being *wirken*, to have an effect or more simply to work in the sense we use when we say that a medicine works. The double suffixes of *-lich* and *-keit* both have a variety of English counterparts but most often can become the English suffixes of *-ly* and *-ness*, respectively. So what we literally have in this word, translated into English is *workliness* or *effectliness*. Neither of these suffices as they are nonsensical words in English and while making up some neologism can sometimes be useful, as Heidegger was a master of this, it isn't always the answer. It might be interesting to note at this point that Heidegger's use of neologisms was his attempt to translate his own ideas, effectively he had to teach even speakers of his own language to see what he saw.

As this multiplicity of German terms use deliberately creates only confusion in English, we must turn to the actual use of the words in their original language to get a better idea than what we can take merely from the rules of grammar and ostensive definitions. The German *Wirklichkeit* is often used more in the sense of the *significance* or *meaning* of something, e.g. in speech acts; according to Austin<sup>2</sup> and Searle<sup>3</sup>, there is the locutionary act which is the utterance itself and what it means ostensibly as well as the illocutionary act which is the intended meaning and may be very different from the locutionary act and there is also the perlocutionary act which is the actual effect (or side-effect) of the illocutionary act. In such cases, the intended meaning (illocutionary act) would be described with some variant of *Wirklichkeit* while the utterance itself would fall under the term *Realität*.

2 Cf. J. L. Austin, "How to Do Things With Words"

3 Cf. John R. Searle "Mind, Language and Society"

In contrast to *Wirklichkeit*, Wittgenstein, much later in the *TLP*, uses the German word *Realität*. Here however, Wittgenstein has a very different concept or phenomenon in mind from that covered by his use of *Wirklichkeit*. This gets lost in both the Ogden and the P/M translations and is a distinction that would have been lost to me had I not come to a German speaking environment to learn. Here Wittgenstein is getting at a more scientific meaning of the word, i.e. he uses the word to describe that which is the object of the natural sciences. Heidegger likewise uses the German *Realität* in this fashion.

Even if the translator takes great pains to draw out such subtle distinctions, as our next example from *BT* will show, it is not always effective. As with the word ‘reality’, *interpretation* also has multiple German counterparts. Heidegger uses both in distinctly different ways. The M/R translation takes note of this but they have chosen to distinguish the two uses by capitalizing one of the instances in the English, *Interpretation*, for the same word in German, while translating the common German word *Auslegung* with a lowercase ‘i’ as, *interpretation*. The latter German word, used more often by Heidegger, refers to our everyday existence and more literally translates as an out-laying of something. However the obvious English counterpart to this, layout, already has its own German counterpart and doesn’t capture the phenomenon that Heidegger is describing. Interpretation is reserved by Heidegger, as with *Realität* in both Heidegger and Wittgenstein, for a scientific or theoretical meaning coming after reflection and analysis. This difference is as crucial to understanding *BT* as the difference in the terms for reality is to the proper understanding of the *TLP*. Both aim to correct the error of defining the world in terms of dualisms: subjects/objects, inner/outer worlds that are an effect of the modern, natural science dominated mindset.

Both of these examples illustrate one of the difficulties facing the translator and I hope to show why the translator must be seen, and see him- or herself as a teacher. In short, it was not the translation from German to English of the words in the above examples but the “translation” of me, the reader, which made these subtleties appear. My horizons broadened from those of a purely American English speaking world to a world including the horizon of a German speaker as well. But as with the art of the Renaissance and Baroque, not all artists could travel to the major art capitals in Italy to learn their skills, and yet Dutch landscape artists created astonishing mountain scenes based solely on the reports of travelers and the prints and paintings by those artists who had crossed the magnificence of the Alps without the aid of flight. Translation is more art than an equation.

That the logic of grammar and ostensive definition are insufficient to the task of translating should be obvious even with only these two examples. With the failure of even the best computers to accurately translate from one language to another we have learned that meaning cannot be captured in a predicate calculus.<sup>4</sup> But, as art has shown, it is also not impossible to accomplish the aim.

Up to now, I have offered examples from my own personal experiences dealing with philosophy and translation and learning. It is also necessary and perhaps more important to point out why a translator should see his/her work as teaching beyond my personal experiences and for this we must briefly turn to Heidegger's analysis of being-there<sup>5</sup> which, among other threefolds in *BT*, he analyzes as what he calls, the *fore-structure*. His initial ideas on this, as well as a more detailed explanation than what appears in *BT* occur in his lectures running up to the publication of *BT*, notably, *The Basic Concepts of Aristotelian Philosophy* (*BAP*).

In *BAP* Heidegger devotes an entire section to the description of being-there as having what he calls, the fore-structure, which goes hand-in-hand with what he calls the *as-structure* of the world. The as-structure itself is broken down into two aspects, one of the primordially familiar *existential-hermeneutic-as* of everyday dealing with things in the world and the *apophantic-as* of reflection, analysis and, most importantly for us, human communication. The fore-structure, which constitutes in its unity the "...interpretation of being-there, being-transparent" (Heidegger 2009, 187), consists of a fore-grasp<sup>6</sup> (future), fore-having (past) and a fore-sight (present).<sup>7</sup>

The fore-grasp is the overall intelligibility that comes from our understanding; the paradigm one might say, to borrow a term from Kuhn<sup>8</sup>: "The governing intelligibility,

<sup>4</sup> Hubert Dreyfus wrote his book, among other things, *What Computers Can't Do*, with the question of artificial intelligence in mind and deals directly with this issue.

<sup>5</sup> Although the Heideggerian Da-sein has been adopted into English and even approved by Heidegger himself I prefer to continue to translate the term more literally in an effort to help shake English speakers out of the error of simply equating Da-sein with subject.

<sup>6</sup> The English translations of *Being and Time* both translate the Heideggerian neologism *Vorgriff* as "fore-conception". I agree, however, with the translators of *BAP* in translating it as *fore-grasp*. I feel this translation is more accurate in that it captures a more basic or fundamental mode of understanding which underlies a conception. We have this sense in English when we say that we want to try and grasp something or better still the English idiom, 'to get a handle on something'. It has the sense of understanding along the lines of familiarity and know-how, of skill, rather than a theoretical conception which is more developed and requires a grasp or know-how of something before the analysis to develop a conception occurs.

<sup>7</sup> The fore-structure is also mentioned but not explained in *Being and Time*.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Thomas S. Kuhn: "The Structure of Scientific Revolutions"

which includes expressing<sup>9</sup> as articulation, I designate fore-grasp.” (Heidegger 2009, 187) This corresponds with being-there’s being-ahead-of-itself, i.e. the future aspect of the care structure. Having a fore-grasp gives one the intelligibility to press into possibilities that which we encounter in the world and share that with others (expressing as articulation) revealing the entities in themselves. That is, certain things show up in the world with certain affordances based on our fore-grasp and we can communicate this to others.

The fore-having corresponds to being-there’s facticity; as Heidegger puts it, “[t]his peculiar fact, that the world into which I enter, in which I awaken, is there for me in a determinate interpretedness [*Ausgelegtheit*]<sup>10</sup>, I designate terminologically as the fore-having.” (Heidegger 2009, 186)

Fore-sight is being-there’s dealing with the world; being-there’s circumspective concern. In this way the thing being dealt with by any given being-there is seen with regard to its place in the matrix of equipmentality<sup>11</sup> at that particular moment, in that concrete situation: “The being that is already there stands in a definite respect; all seeing, all taking-in-some-respect, is determined in the concrete sense.” (Heidegger 2009, 186-7)

When one puts them all together as the so-called fore-structure we have the “circle of understanding,”<sup>12</sup> as he calls it in *BT*, which, “...is not an orbit in which any random kind of knowledge may move...” (Heidegger 1962, 195) rather it is the unity, “...which I designate as interpretation [*Ausgelegtheit*] of being-there, being-transparent.” (Heidegger 2009, 187)

Now we have the fore-structure which is the basic understanding of being-there as such. Now we need to see how Heidegger then develops the equiprimordial as-structure from this and although the account of this in *BT* is one of the most important sections of the book it, like the fore-structure, is not well explained there and Heidegger’s 1925-6 lecture course on logic offers a much better and clearer explanation of not only the as-structure but its central significance to being-there and making-present<sup>13</sup>. Heidegger’s

9 Here Heidegger uses the term *aussprechen* (express or declare) while in *Sein und Zeit* he uses the term *Aussage* (assertion or claim). This may be the evidence of the refinement of these ideas from the *BAP*, which are paralleled in from ¶32 to ¶34 of chapter 5 of Division I of *Being and Time*.

10 I would render “in einer bestimmten *Ausgelegtheit* für mich da ist” rather as “laid-out before me in a determinate way” as the *Ausgelegtheit* (literally laid-outness) is yet another of Heidegger’s own neologisms as previously mentioned.

11 *Zeugganzheit*

12 Cf. *BT* 194-195

13 Making-present or presencing as it sometimes gets translated is one of the key terms in Heidegger and goes to defining the essence, as it were, of our being. Volumes have been written including by Heidegger himself attempting to explain it and we do not have the space here to deal adequately with this critical term although it is central to our discussion of translation and teaching.

revealing of the as-structure comes through his analysis of λόγος and assertion. The as-structure, in its existential-hermeneutical form, is something that is always-already there for us as beings-there. This comes out in our everyday dealings as we, e.g., drive a nail with a hammer. As such, it does not get expressed but in our taking up the hammer and hammering we have revealed it as a hammer. This existential-hermeneutical ‘as’ is not yet the apophantical ‘as’ of assertion but it underlies it. Heidegger’s analysis of assertion, which is extremely condensed on pages 196-7 in *BT*, runs basically as follows: an assertion points something out, i.e. it is the “λόγος as ἀπόφασις—letting an entity be seen from itself” (Heidegger 1962, 196) which gives an entity a definite character and communicates, i.e. allows others to share what has been seen by way of pointing something out about it.<sup>14</sup> However, we must remember that λόγος is already there in the “existential-hermeneutical ‘as’” (Heidegger 1962, 201) of circumspective concern. What Heidegger runs over too quickly in this section of *BT* he explains better in *Logic: the Question of Truth (LQT)*, where he lists the following three levels of assertion (which are based on the existential-hermeneutical ‘as’, i.e. circumspective concern): level 1 is a statement that draws our attention to something of use, i.e. the ready-to-hand, e.g. the hammer is for hammering, level 2 determines or gives that thing of use a definite character, i.e. lets us notice something present-at-hand in the ready-to-hand, e.g. this hammer is too heavy, and level 3 then takes over that statement making a formal logical statement such as the hammer has weight (or mass). How does this asserting correspond with the fore-structure? Well level 1 brings about a change in the fore-having, level 2 a change in the fore-sight and level 3 then a change in the fore-grasp. Basically, we learned something. Now once we have a change in our fore-grasp we have a change in the everyday intelligibility of the world, i.e. our paradigm, which is the existential-hermeneutical ‘as’ of our primary understanding or, as Heidegger phrases it, “[t]he [existential-hermeneutical] ‘as’ is the basic structure whereby we understand and have access to anything.” (Heidegger 2010, 129) Now we can see a developmental process at work with a pedagogical imperative, if you will, in the act of asserting when we also recognize the importance of communication in this process. We should also see now how this relates to a translator as a teacher who has the task of bringing something that has appeared in the fore-grasp of someone from one group of speakers with the fore-having of that person’s place in space-time (family, culture, history, etc.) into

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14 Cf. *BT* 1962, 199



the fore-grasp of another via the fore-sight of dealing with a translation either audio or visual.

Heidegger notes that talk (*Rede*)<sup>15</sup> is the condition for the possibility of language, i.e. “[t]he basic movement is not from language to speaking but from speaking to language.”<sup>16</sup> (Heidegger 2010, 113) ‘Talk’ is, according to Heidegger, *ἀπόφανσις*, i.e. making-present in sharing with others the articulation of that which is articulated. It is a mode of *λόγος* made concrete in speaking. In his second introduction to *BT* Heidegger notes that this requires that, “*λόγος* [has] the structural form of *σύνθεσις*.” (Heidegger 1962, 56) Synthesis is not, however, the creation of something new. Heidegger argues that synthesis is rather the showing of things in their togetherness, in other words things show up as something, e.g. as something to write with, as something to open, as something to throw, etc.. The as-structure, i.e. something showing up as something (existential-hermeneutical ‘as’) is expressed in assertion (apophantic ‘as’) and thereby shared with others.<sup>17</sup>

It should also be clear now that there is a strong pedagogic thrust in Heidegger’s analysis of being-there in general. We can already anticipate the importance of this for our discussion when we look at a couple of Heidegger’s statements from 1940’s; the first, in the postscript which Heidegger added in 1943 to his 1929 essay “What is Metaphysics?”, we find the following statement: “Der Denker sagt das Sein. Der Dichter nennt das Heilige.” (Heidegger 1978, 309)<sup>18</sup> Here Heidegger is recalling the importance of language and the primordial function that language as poesy has in making-present. The thinker and the poet are intimately related to one another; as Robert Bernasconi states it while referencing Heidegger’s essays “On the Essence of Ground” and “The Origin of the Work of Art”: “...this guardianship of language shared by poetry and thinking is no minor affair. Indeed this is how man serves as the shepherd of being or corresponds to the destiny of being.” (Bernasconi 1991, 30)

<sup>15</sup> English editions of *BT* translate the German *Rede* with “discourse”.

<sup>16</sup> Unfortunately at the time of this writing, I was unable to gain access to GA 21 to check the original German but my hunch is that the translator of *LQT* has translated *Rede* with ‘speaking’ and *Sprache* with ‘language’. Rendering them as ‘talk’ (which is the condition of the possibility of language) and ‘language’ respectively would not only make the meaning clear but also coordinate with *BT*, which Heidegger published immediately following this lecture course.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. *BT* pp. 56 and 204-5 where Heidegger notes the importance of communication as understanding (fore-grasp).

<sup>18</sup> Robert Bernasconi remarks on this phrase in his book, *The Question of Language in Heidegger’s History of Being*, and translates it as the following, “The thinker says being; the poet names the holy.” Unlike many of Heidegger’s other statements this is a straightforward translation easily made into English.



And if we return to the opening of the 1947 “Letter on Humanism” we find Heidegger stating: “Language is the house of being. In its home [being-there] dwells. Those who think and those who create with words are the guardians of this home.” (Heidegger 1993, 217)

Translators must be both poets and thinkers and must be able to both say what is and name what’s holy such that the audience comes to understand both. Returning now to our examples from the beginning of translational difficulties and looking at Heidegger’s assertions about being-there and the fore- and as-structures respectively we can see how a translator must indeed teach the audience. It is not enough to merely move the words about from one language to another, or even with in a single language as Heidegger’s use of neologisms demonstrates, but the philosopher and the translator have the difficult task of teaching so that their audience becomes aware of some aspect of the world and more importantly shares this awareness with others.

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